



Director of
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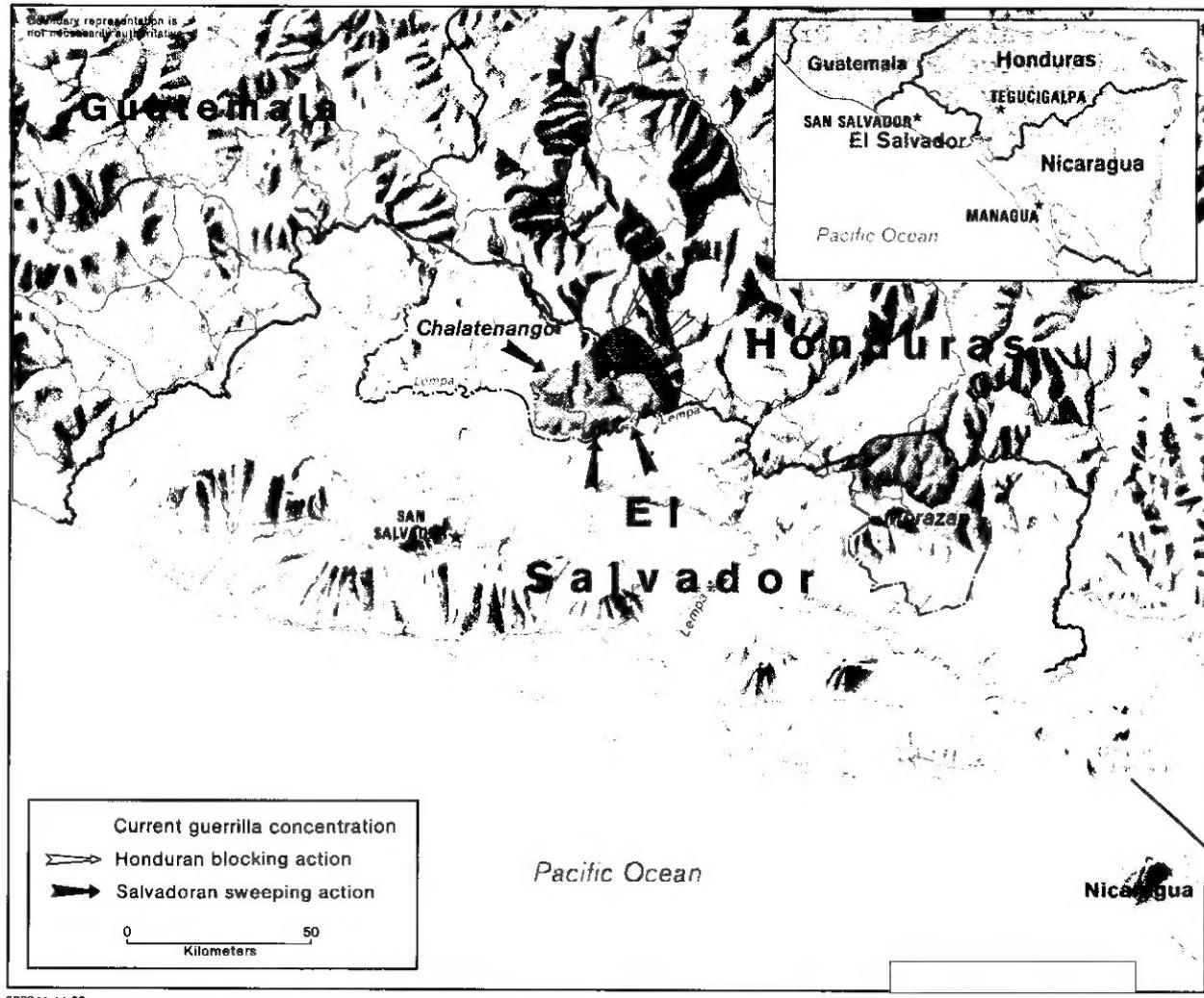
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EL SALVADOR: Government Counteroffensive Intensifies

About 6,000 Salvadoran and Honduran troops are engaged in the largest combined operation thus far against insurgents in eastern Chalatenango Department.

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Twelve Salvadoran infantry battalions--backed by air support and artillery and including those units trained by the US and Venezuela--have encountered stiff resistance from the guerrillas since the counteroffensive began last Wednesday. The area of operations is particularly large.

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The operation is expected to last at least another week, after which Honduran and Salvadoran forces will begin a similar campaign in northern Morazan Department.

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Comment: If properly executed, the government's counteroffensive probably will offset much of the insurgents' military and political gains during the past month. The morale of the armed forces is likely to improve considerably if they can retake and hold lost ground.

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Guerrilla units in Morazan probably plan initially to defend areas they have occupied since mid-October. Even so, if the guerrillas cannot increase their present levels of resupply they can be expected to return to smaller scale harassment activities. Such activities could nevertheless include spectacular acts of terrorism in both El Salvador and Honduras in response to the combined counteroffensive.

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PANAMA: Results of Mexican Trip

Following the high-level conference on Central America in Mexico City last week, President de la Espriella stated publicly that he now favors the Mexican-Venezuelan proposal to ease tensions between Honduras and Nicaragua over that adopted by the US and other countries in the San Jose Declaration of early October. During a brief stopover meeting in San Salvador, the Panamanian delegation also offered to broker talks between the Salvadoran Government and leftist insurgents. Nonetheless, according to US Embassy reporting, de la Espriella was disappointed with his inability to achieve any accord on regional issues in separate meetings with Mexican, Nicaraguan, and Salvadoran officials. Moreover, National Guard Commander Paredes subsequently publicly ruled out Panamanian involvement in regional problems unless his country's security is threatened.

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Comment: Panama's regional policy remains confused following de la Espriella's failure to spur a peace initiative. Meanwhile, the already strained relationship between the President and Paredes appears to have worsened over policy matters.

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⑩ Special Analysis

ISRAEL-LEBANON: Tel Aviv's Political Goals

Israel's primary long-term goals in Lebanon are to reach an agreement with the Lebanese Government that normalizes relations and to develop significant political influence north of the proposed security zone. The Israelis realize the massacre in Beirut and the assumption of power by Amin Jumayyil have lessened their chances of achieving their aims quickly. Nonetheless, senior Israeli officials seem determined to maintain the pressure and believe that their goals can eventually be reached.

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President Jumayyil's reluctance to enter into direct talks on political issues has been a major blow to Israeli hopes. The Israelis are distressed at his business-as-usual approach and are worried about his efforts to reach an accommodation with the Syrians and the PLO.

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The Israelis had hoped that their longstanding ties with Lebanon's Christian community and especially with Jumayyil's late brother, Bashir, would result in fast political payoffs. Tel Aviv now believes, however, that the new President lacks his brother's imagination and will and that his concern for consensus is likely to damage Israeli interests.

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The developing relationship between Jumayyil and the US also disturbs the Israelis. They suspect Jumayyil is using it to replace their influence and improve Lebanese ties with the Arab world.

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Moreover, some Israelis suspect the US also is working to block political agreements between Beirut and Tel Aviv. They believe that the US wants to use the negotiations for a withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon to weaken Syria's ties to Moscow and that Washington fears a peace treaty would hamper this effort. In the Israeli view, the US also fears that a treaty would lessen Israel's incentives to work toward a comprehensive peace in the Middle East and thus should be postponed until more progress is made on a broader Arab-Israeli agreement.

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Maintaining the Pressure

Despite these concerns, the tough Israeli stance during preliminary negotiations with the Lebanese suggests Tel Aviv will continue to push for a peace treaty and substantial Israeli influence with a Christian-dominated government. The Israelis' determination is reflected in their demands for ministerial-level talks, meetings in Jerusalem, and a "political" agreement before discussions on security issues.

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Ties to the Phalange Militia

Israel's links with the semiautonomous militia forces of Jumayyil's Phalange Party offer it an opportunity to influence political developments in Lebanon. The militia leaders, whose forces have been partially trained and equipped by Israel, are sympathetic to its political aims.

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The US Role

The Israelis also believe that the US will find it difficult to maintain its heavy involvement in Lebanon and will eventually drop its opposition to an Israeli-Lebanese peace treaty.

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As a result, Israel almost certainly will keep up the pressure for a full-scale peace agreement.

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